

***U. S. Department of Energy (DOE)  
Office of Nuclear Energy (NE) Voucher Program***

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

**Q1: What is the Nuclear Energy Voucher Program?**

A1: The Nuclear Energy Voucher Program, sponsored by the Department of Energy's (DOE) Office of Nuclear Energy (NE), is a program to assist small business applicants seeking access to the nuclear energy-related knowledge and capabilities available across the DOE complex. It is a pilot program of limited scope that will be evaluated for future use.

**Q2: Is the NE Voucher Program related to any other DOE Programs?**

A2: It is modeled after DOE's Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Small Business Voucher Program established in 2015. It is being administered under NE's new Gateway for Accelerated Innovation in Nuclear (GAIN) initiative, the nuclear energy component of DOE's Clean Energy Investment Center.

**Q3: How much funding is available?**

A3: Under the initial pilot, up to \$2 million is available in vouchers redeemable at DOE national laboratories or Nuclear Science User Facility (NSUF) partner facilities to assist small business applicants.

**Q4: What is a voucher, and how much will each voucher be worth?**

A4: The voucher is like a coupon that can be redeemed for work at selected facilities. Vouchers provide funding to a DOE national laboratory or NSUF partner facility to help small businesses overcome critical technology and commercialization challenges. Vouchers are not financial awards made directly to small businesses. The final value of each voucher will be negotiated but will range from \$50,000-\$300,000. Vouchers cannot be used to obtain services or use equipment that is available in the private sector.

During the initial pilot project, DOE-NE anticipates awarding up to 10 vouchers. A selected small business will be required to provide a minimum of 20 percent cost-share, which can be in the form of cash or in-kind work, etc.

The Department strongly prefers that the vouchers be used within 12 months from the date the agreement is executed. It is **not** taxable income for your small business.

**Q5: Who is eligible to apply and what is required?**

A5: An eligible requester is a small business that is (1) organized for-profit; (2) has less than 500 employees; (3) is majority (51%) owned by a U.S. citizen or lawfully admitted permanent resident alien; (4) is organized according to the laws of any of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, or any U.S. territory or possession; and (5) operates primarily within the U.S. Products embodying intellectual property developed under the assistance must be substantially manufactured in the United States. Requestors must certify that they will accept the NE Voucher Program Agreements and they will provide the required 20 percent (or more) cost-share upon selection for a voucher.

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**Q6: What agreements will be used for the NE Voucher Program?**

A6: DOE has developed two standard agreements to be used under the voucher pilot, including a Cooperative Research and Development Agreement (CRADA) and a Technical Assistance Pilot Agreement (TAPA). All voucher recipients will sign one of these two standard agreements, depending on whether or not intellectual property (IP) is developed as a result of the project. Both templates are available at <https://gain.inl.gov>

- Small businesses may engage with DOE national laboratory or partner facilities on collaborative research and development (R&D) that may result in the development of IP. In that case, a Cooperative R&D Agreement (commonly called a CRADA) may be the most appropriate agreement.
- Alternatively, NE Vouchers may be awarded to requesters who do not anticipate the development of IP, and in those cases the Technical Assistance Pilot Agreement (commonly called a TAPA) may be the more appropriate agreement.

**Q7: Can the CRADA or TAPA terms of these agreements be negotiated?**

A7: DOE-NE is committed reducing the processing time and expediting the conduct of work to support the small business community under the voucher pilot; therefore, standard terms and conditions in the CRADA and TAPA will not be negotiated.

**Q8: Can you clarify whether intellectual property (IP) remains with the applicant?**

A8: Generally, inventions created under the program will be owned by the party making the invention. The applicant also has a nonexclusive license in the Lab's inventions and an option to negotiate an exclusive license. Data produced under the program may be protected for a period of five years and may be copyrighted at the applicant's option. The government will have a nonexclusive license in any inventions or copyright. Please refer to the specific agreements for further details.

**Q9: Should I include proprietary information in my Request for Assistance (RFA)?**

A9: No. Please do not provide any proprietary information in your RFA, or in supporting documentation or resumes.

**Q10: Can I submit more than one application?**

A10: Each eligible entity may submit up to two applications under the NE Voucher Program pilot; however, no more than one voucher application will be selected/finalized for an eligible recipient.

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**Q11: Can you explain the concept of cost-share and in-kind services?**

A11: Cost-share of no less than 20% is required. Requesters may provide cost-share in the form of cash or in-kind contributions for things such as personnel costs; indirect costs; facilities and administrative costs; rental value of buildings or equipment; and the value of a service, other resource, or third party in-kind contribution; etc.

Cost-share contribution must be reasonable, allowable, and allocable under the applicable Federal cost principles. In addition, cost share must be verifiable during the process to finalize scope, cost and schedule following selection. Requesters may use funding or property received from state or local governments to meet the cost-share requirement, so long as the funding was not provided to the state or local government by the Federal Government. The following sources may NOT be used by the requester to meet its cost-share obligations, including, but not limited to, revenues or royalties from the prospective operation of an activity beyond the project period; proceeds from the prospective sale of an asset of an activity; federal funding or property (e.g., Federal grants, equipment owned by the Federal Government); or expenditures that were reimbursed under a separate Federal Technology Office. For example, Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR)/Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) funding cannot be used to provide in-kind or direct cost-share. Small businesses with SBIR/STTR funding can make a request for assistance under the NE Voucher Program, but the scope of work must be distinct from existing SBIR/STTR projects.

For more information on allowable cost-share, please refer to the Federal Acquisition Regulations (FAR) Part 31 at <http://farsite.hill.af.mil/reghtml/regs/far2afmcfars/far/fars/far/31.htm>.

**Q12: If I already have Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) funding for a similar project, can that money be used as cost-share?**

A12: No. SBIR funding, even if from another agency, cannot be used as cost-share. Federal funding cannot be considered cost-share.

**Q13: What labs, partner facilities are available and how can I learn what capabilities exist?**

A13: Our goal is to improve access to the capabilities that exist across the complex of DOE National Laboratories. In addition, the DOE-NE Nuclear Science User Facility (NSUF) program provides access to additional capabilities at NSUF partner facilities. A description of each NSUF partner facility and its capabilities can be found at <https://atrnusuf.inl.gov>.

**Q14: What are the selection criteria and how are they weighted?**

A14: The three criterion and their weightings are

- Technical Merit (50 Points)
- Business and Market Impact (40 Points)
- Qualifications and Experience (10 Points)

For additional information on the Merit Review Criteria, see Section E. of the NE Voucher Program Request for Assistance (RFA).

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**Q15: What information will I be asked to provide in the Request for Assistance (RFA), and how long does the RFA submission process take?**

A15: NE Voucher application instructions are available on the GAIN Website. You will be required to create an account using the link to the application page. You can access this page up to March 30, 2016 to add information and make changes as long as you click the SAVE button. A technical narrative document is required, which will be uploaded to the application site. A short resume document is optional. The application process should take less than 30 minutes to complete, assuming all your information is available.

**Q16: How do I submit a Request for Assistance (RFA)?**

A16: If you are interested in submitting an application, please access the NE Voucher Program on the GAIN Website at <https://gain.inl.gov>. The final NE Voucher Program RFA will be available on March 1, 2016.

**Q17: How long after I submit my request will I know whether or not I will receive a voucher?**

A17: The tentative schedule for the program is:

- On or about March 1, 2016 - Request for Assistance (RFA) opens
- March 30, 2016 - RFA closes (6:00 pm Mountain Time)
- Mid-May 2016 - Notification of selections
- Mid-May to Mid-June 2016 - Finalization of statement of work, budget and cost-share

This schedule anticipates evaluating all applications and making preliminary selections within roughly six weeks. Selected recipients would be notified at this time to begin working directly with the GAIN point of contact in order to finalize the work scope, cost (including cost-share) and schedule.

In the event that the scope, cost and schedule parameters become inconsistent with the voucher program parameters, or are not mutually agreeable, the preliminary selection for that recipient will be cancelled and an alternative selection will be made.

**Q18: Can I team with a national laboratory or NSUF partner facility to develop an application?**

A18: A small business may contact the GAIN office or the points of contacts listed in the Nuclear Energy Infrastructure Database to explore the available capabilities and how they may address your needs. The application form provides an opportunity to identify the specific capability that you are interested in (e.g., facility, capability, point of contact), if known, but this is not mandatory. However, the application belongs to the small business alone and will be judged based on the selection criteria, which are focused on the small business. This process does not accommodate, or consider, partnerships between the small business requesting the voucher and any other entity.

**Q19: Can multiple small businesses teams submit a common Request for Assistance?**

A19: For this pilot program, a single entity (i.e., eligible small business) will be the recipient of the voucher, will enter into the appropriate agreement (i.e., CRADA or TAPA) and will be obligated to provide the required cost share. This does not preclude an eligible small business from entering into external agreements with other small businesses as appropriate to share the cost and benefits of a proposal. If, for example, the market impacts/benefits extend beyond the small business that is applying, that could be discussed in the application as a favorable element.